

Second New York Murder Prompts Members to Call for End to Hate Violence

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Today House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Chair of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties, Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) Chair of the Immigration Subcommittee, and New York Member of Congress Tim Bishop (D-NY) addressed the recent hate crime murders in New York, calling for an end to ethnic and racially motivated violence, pledging to pass strong hate crimes legislation in the 111th Congress.

Yesterday, Jose O. Sucuzhanay succumbed to injuries suffered from a brutal beating in Brooklyn, New York by thugs shouting anti-Latino and anti-gay slurs. Mr. Sucuzhanay was attacked on Saturday evening as he and his brother were walking home. While his brother escaped serious harm, Sucuzhanay became the second Latino killed in hate crime violence in the past month in New York; on November 8, Marcelo Lucero died of multiple stab wounds in a racially-motivated attack by a group of teens in Patchogue, New York. According to 2007 FBI figures, Hispanics comprised 62 percent of all the hate crime victims targeted for their ethnicity or national origin.

"I am filled with grief for these victims and their poor families," said Conyers. "Knowing that these men were lost to their families at the hands of racially-motivated killers fills my heart with sorrow. We have come too far in this country to stand idly by while hate-inspired violence continues to persist in America. Sickening crimes like these underscore the threat still faced by some in our society and demonstrate why hate crimes legislation must be enacted. I join my colleagues here today to pledge immediate attention to this issue when Congress returns in January."

"Hate crimes target not just the victims but are intended to terrorize an entire community," said Nadler. "Hate crimes against Latinos have been on the rise for the last several years and we cannot ignore the toxic environment in which these crimes occur. And hate crimes against gays and those mistakenly identified as gay — as was likely the case with Mr. Sucuzhanay — must not be tolerated. The Judiciary Committee is committed to working with local law enforcement and the Department of Justice to ensure that these crimes are prevented, and, when they occur, punished to the full extent of the law. I also urge the Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice to act swiftly to intervene in these most recent cases to assist the affected communities."

"I'm appalled by these senseless attacks," noted Lofgren. "Hate crimes undermine the very fabric of our society, tearing away at the bonds that hold our multi-ethnic democracy together. Every effort must be made to combat these heinous and mindless acts. The House Judiciary Committee will continue to work diligently to insure that local, state, and federal prosecutors have the tools and resources they need to bring those who commit these crimes to justice. My colleagues and I will continue efforts to bring our diverse constituencies together and foster a larger sense of community."

"When hatred is allowed to build and fester, it eventually finds its way onto our streets," Bishop said. "The attack on Jose Sucuzhanay, in the wake of the murder of Marcello Lucero, is the tragic result of hatred that has been allowed to fester for far too long. This recent attack demonstrates that hatred is not just limited to one community and that it will require a sustained, united effort to combat. As elected leaders, we must not only write tougher laws to punish hate crimes, but dedicate ourselves to addressing the root causes of this hatred."